

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 00814 141026Z

53

ACTION EA-09

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R 141004Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6739

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

CONFIDENTIAL BANGKOK 0814

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEAN TH

SUBJECT: THAI VIEW ON ASEAN PROSPECTS

1. NIT PHIBUNSONGKHRAM, CHIEF, SOUTHEAST ASIAN DIVISION, MFA TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER JANUARY 13 THAT HE DEFINITELY EXPECTED THE EARLY FEBRUARY ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING IN BANGKOK TO PROCEED AS SCHEDULED, NOTWITHSTANDING THE RECENT DISSOLUTION OF THE THAI PARLIAMENT. HE FURTHER SAW NO REASON WHY KHUKRIT WOULD NOT FIND IT POSSIBLE TO ATTEND THE ASEAN SUMMIT IN BALI LATER IN FEBRUARY.

2. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ON THE PROSPECTS FOR SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS EMERGING FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTERS' AND THE SUMMIT MEETINGS, NIT TOOK REFUGE IN PLATITUDES. HE SAID THE FIVE-MEMBER COUNTRIES WERE IN SUBSTANTIAL CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 00814 141026Z

AGREEMENT ON THE GENERAL DIRECTION THAT ASEAN SHOULD TAKE,

AND THAT APPROPRIATE IMPLEMENTING DECREES COULD FLOW FORTH LATER. HE BRUSHED OFF AS INSIGNIFICANT THE MAJOR POLICY SQUABBLE BETWEEN INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA OVER THE DEGREE TO WHICH ASEAN SHOULD METAMORPHOSE ITSELF INTO AN ALLIANCE AGAINST COMMUNIST INDOCHINA. IN RESPONSE TO OUR OBSERVATION THAT POLICY DIRECTIVES AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES WERE ONLY AS GOOD AS THEIR EXECUTION, NIT ADMITTED BLITHELY THAT THERE WAS INDEED A GAP OF THIS SORT IN ASEAN.

3. COMMENT: BY HIS OWN ADMISSION, NIT HAS BEEN WORKING FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS ON MFA POSITION PAPERS REGARDING ASEAN AND OR THE NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA PROPOSALS. HE THEREFORE HAS CONSIDERABLE EGO INVOLVEMENT AND DIMINISHED OBJECTIVITY WITH REGARD TO THE REAL STATE OF PLAY WITHIN AND PROSPECTS FOR ASEAN. THERE IS A NOTICEABLE ABSENCE OF HARD PRAGMATISM IN MOST OF HIS STATEMENTS ON THE SUBJECT. FROM THE BANGKOK VANTAGE POINT, THEREFORE, WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO HAVE MUCH HOPE FOR CONCRETE ACHIEVEMENTS AT EITHER THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING OR THE SUBSEQUENT SUMMIT CONFABULATION.

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